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Written statement* submitted by the Maarij Foundation for Peace and Development, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[25 May 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Statement on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar

Maarij Foundation for Peace and Development takes this opportunity of the twenty-ninth session of the Human Rights Council to welcome the combined efforts of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar and of the Special Envoy for Myanmar. In its Resolution 28/9 (A/HRC/28/9) the Council expressed its deep concern over the increase of nationalist-based intolerance towards religious and ethnic minorities. The Council, alongside the international community, urged the Government of Myanmar to publicly condemn such discourse and to take all necessary and appropriate action, in conformity with its international human rights obligations, to combat violence.

Likewise, in Resolution 28/11 (A/HRC/28/11) , the Council expressed concern at the Government of Myanmar's declaration that all white card identity documents would expire on 31 March 2015, which will deny persons belonging to the Rohingya minority all forms of identification and the right to vote. The Council has called upon the Government to issue identity documents for all current white card holders, without discrimination, including all persons belonging to the Rohingya minority, to ensure equal access to full citizenship related rights. While welcoming some of the measures taken by the Government, the Council has encouraged it, as well as political and civil society leaders, to facilitate interfaith and intercommunity dialogue, in particular in the Rakhine State, to undertake full, transparent and independent investigations into all reports of human rights violations and abuses, to address the root causes, to ensure accountability and to bring about reconciliation.

Already in 2005 during the 11th Session of the Working Group on Minorities of the UN Commission on Human Rights3, it was highlighted how Rohingya have constantly been subjected to discrimination since Burma's independence in 1948.

Almost a decade after, in January 2015, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar4 has confirmed to us that the situation of Rohingya has not improved at all, expressing concern on the situation of displaced persons in Muslim camps living in abysmal conditions with limited access to food, health care and essential care.

This intolerable situation has also been evidenced by ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights' report5 which has revealed that around 150,000 Rohingya Muslims remain in more than 80 internal displacement camps in the Rakhine State without adequate access to humanitarian aid. Furthermore, more than 100,000 have fled to other countries by sea, often becoming victims of human traffickers.

Despite its continued effort towards a durable nationwide ceasefire between ethnic armed groups and an all-inclusive political dialogue leading to comprehensive political solutions, the Maarij Foundation for Peace and Development has recently observed evidence that crimes and human rights violations continue to being committed against Muslim minority groups. Insufficient attention has been paid to the systematic and widespread crimes committed by the armed forces of Myanmar against its ethnic minorities. The Maarij Foundation for Peace and Development has noticed that this campaign of crimes against humanity is still ongoing. In the beginning of May 2015, 469 migrants (83 women and 41 children) were rescued at sea, north of Aceh, by Indonesian emergency services. These migrants had fled their homes and villages because of discrimination and crimes against humanity.

The Maarij Foundation for Peace and Development believes that no credible human rights improvement process can occur in Myanmar while crimes against humanity continue against minority groups. Therefore, we call upon the Human Rights Council to condemn the ongoing ethnic cleansing as well as the rampant campaign of crimes against humanity led by the Myanmar authorities against its ethnic minorities. The Maarij Foundation for Peace and Development urges the Human Rights Council to demand that the Myanmar authorities:

- Ensure that crimes committed by the police and army of Myanmar against its civilians are subject to an independent and impartial investigation;

- Immediately cease its military campaign against ethnic minorities; and

- Protect and promote the rights of minorities in the country.